Part II

THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION, POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES OF THE NILOTES

INTRODUCTION

The structure and organisation of the Nilotic tribal groups, though showing similarities in many respects and suggesting a certain degree of progressive variation from one or two structural types, cannot be considered in one descriptive whole owing to the complexity of the subject. It is therefore proposed to consider the main Nilotic groups in turn and in conclusion to point out some of the features common to all.

Except where specifically mentioned, the information relating to a people applies to their indigenous organisation.

THE SHILLUK

GENERAL

The Shilluk live in a number of hamlets and settlements which, almost without a break, line the west bank of the White Nile from about 11°N. lat. to Lake No in the south. There are also a few settlements on the east bank and along the lower reaches of the Sobat river.

They are predominantly agricultural and sedentary, owning comparatively few cattle. The long river frontage of their habitat gives them adequate water and grazing in the dry season for the few cattle they do possess. There are no large scale transhumant movements in the dry season to find cattle pastures. Only youths go into dry season cattle camps which are situated mainly on islands in the river or in dry water-courses near it. The cultivations are likewise nearby, either in the settlement area or inland a short distance away. Ecological conditions therefore enable the people to remain in the same place all the year round and render the settlement areas self-contained economically.

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE

TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS AND KINSHIP UNITS

The Homestead (gol)

The *gol* is the smallest social unit in the tribe and usually consists of about two huts encircled by a fence. Every married man has a *gol* which he occupies with his wife, or wives, and children. In addition

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partly a creative process, and there is no writing to establish a preferred and approved text. Shilluk experience and knowledge of their world, which we here try to understand by analysis and systematization, is by them synthesised in an imaginative whole, at the centre of which are their early leader and hero, Nyikang, and the divine being which they call *juok*. Though *juok* is thought ultimately to dispose what happens in the universe, Nyikang, who created the Shilluk kingdom, is the subject of most mythology. There is nowhere any indication that the Shilluk have formulated elaborate ideas of the general order of all creation. Their notion of cosmogenesis is of the creation of that order which, as they see it, was built up by Nyikang, and has been maintained by his successors, the Shilluk kings. Before considering the wider significance of Nyikang and *juok*, it is convenient to give a brief account of the land of the Shilluk, the life they lead in it, and the general outlines of their social organization. With these in mind, it is possible to analyse their cosmological ideas in the broad outline to which an essay of this length is necessarily restricted.

Environment and History

The Shilluk live along the west bank of the Nile in the south of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, where their hamlets are built in close succession, following the line of the river from around Kaka to Lake No. They are about 110,000 people,[1] densely settled on a narrow strip of savannah country nearly 200 miles long, and four to five walking-hours in width. The soil is black and fertile near the river and its inlets, becoming sandier towards the neighbouring Arab country in the north and the Arab and Nuba country of Kordofan to the west. On the east bank of the Nile are the related Dinka, the Shilluks' neighbours to the east and south, and there are Shilluk settlements, bounded by Dinka and Nuer, on the east bank and on the lower reaches of the Sobat. Though their values are predominantly those of a cattle-herding people, the Shilluk lead a less pastoral, transhumant life than the Nuer or Dinka.[2] Their cattle are estimated at 25,000, and they keep sheep and goats. Since their settlements are strung along the bank of the Nile, they can find grass for their herds near home in the dry season, from January to April, and cultivation seems to receive more time and attention among them than among less sedentary Nilotes. From June to September the rains fall, and much of the country becomes flooded. The early rains are the time for sowing the staple crop of millet, of which many varieties are grown, along with maize, sesame, and various beans and pumpkins. These depend upon the rains, and are harvested between September and November. Tobacco, also called 'the grass of the ancestors', depends on hand-watering from the river, near which it is grown in the dry season.

[1] The authorities vary considerably in their estimates of the human and cattle population. The figures given here are quoted from those given by Mr. John Donald, of the Sudan Political Service, and published by Professor Evans-Pritchard, 1948.

[2] P. P. Howell and W. P. G. Thomson, 1946.

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Linguistically, the Shilluk belong to the Luo-speaking people, amongst whom are also the Anuak of the Baro and Pibor rivers between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Ethiopia, the Lango and Acholi of Uganda, the Alur of Uganda and the Belgian Congo, and many scattered groups in the Bahr-el-Ghazal Province of the Sudan, of whom the Luo (Jur) are the most important. Some of these claim some slight contact, in comparatively recent times, with the Shilluk kingdom. Amongst the Luo-speakers the Shilluk are unique in their possession of a single royal dynasty, in relation to which all are members of one Shilluk kingdom, with well-defined territorial and social limits. By this also they are chiefly set apart from the other Nilotic negroes, the Nuer and Dinka, with whom they otherwise have much in common in physique, character, and culture. Perhaps more than the other Nilotes, the Shilluk have for long been in intermittently hostile contact with foreign enemies and foreign governments. The traveller Schweinfurth, who visited them in 1869, says that at that time little or nothing remained of the original condition of the Shilluk, who of all Nilotic negroes 'used to uphold the most perfectly regulated government', which, he says, can only be properly appreciated by reference to the registers of the expedition of Mohammed Ali earlier in the century.[1] We cannot now know what the Shilluk were really like at that time, and it is certain that some of their indigenous custom, particularly that concerning the election and disposal of the Shilluk king, has been interfered with to such an extent that the Shilluk themselves are uncertain about some details of the old belief and practice. Nevertheless, until the present day the Shilluk have retained a consciousness of their national identity and integrity, and have been slow to modify their ideas to accord with those of the various strangers in their land. The main features of their social structure remain, and under the present government, versions of their ceremonies for the funeral and installation of the king have been carefully observed and described.[2] Enough of the traditional practice and belief remains, and has been recorded, to make unnecessary too much speculative reconstruction of the Shilluk past; unfortunately the absence of historical records makes it impossible to study the development of the kingship, which might explain some apparent anomalies in accounts of the present situation.

Social Organization

The Shilluk are divided, on the basis of descent traced in the male line, into about 100 different descent groups, which have been called both clans and lineages. They are exogamous, and some of them, at least, are totemically affiliated with natural or artificial species of various kinds. Members of these descent groups may be found living in any part of Shilluk country, and the main groups are themselves dispersed in smaller groups throughout Shilluk country. The largest descent groups are without any corporate existence.

[1] G. Schweinfurth, 1873, p. 93.
[2] P. Munro, 1918, and Howell and Thomson, 1946.

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existence. The smallest unit of Shilluk social structure is the family (*gol*) living in a homestead of one or two huts. From one to fifty or more such homesteads built together form a hamlet, the members of which keep their cattle together, and are gathered round a headman; a group of hamlets forms a settlement, of which there are about a hundred in Shilluk-land. The settlement is composed of branches of different descent groups, one of which is dominant within the settlement and forms a nucleus around which the others form themselves into a distinct community. This dominant descent group or lineage provides the leader or chief of the settlement. Settlements are politically opposed to each other, though there have been in the past loose confederations of settlements, which have been used, and sharpened in outline, for administrative purposes. The whole of Shilluk land is divided into two provinces, Ger in the north and Luak in the south. All the Shilluk recognize a common head of their whole land, the *reth*, who is here called the king; the king always comes from the royal clan, the *kwareth*, founded by the first Shilluk king, Nyikang; it is the largest clan in Shilluk land, and may have representatives in any settlement. There is now a royal capital at Fashoda. In Shilluk tradition the earliest Shilluk kings had no fixed capital, but reigned from their natal homes. Now, although the capital at Fashoda has been long established, the wives of the king are sent away from Fashoda to various parts of Shilluk land to bear their children, and the children of the king (*nyireth*) are brought up away from the capital. Only those princes whose fathers have been installed as kings of the Shilluk can themselves claim to be installed and, in theory at least, princes who are thus eligible may at any time advance their claims by killing the reigning king. Besides the royal clan, and the lineages of 'commoner' clans, known collectively as the *colo*, there is a distinct clan called *ororo*, originally a branch of the royal house, but said to have been disinherited and cut off by an early Shilluk king. Members of this clan have special duties to perform in connexion with the king, but do not have royal status. In addition, there are the *bang reth*, servants of the king, composed of wives of previous kings, descendants of personal attendants of the king, people possessed by the spirit of Nyikang or of some other king, and others who in one way or another have become retainers dependent on the royal house. From these come the guardians and priests of the shrines of Nyikang, of which there are several in various parts of Shilluk country, and the shrines and graves of other Shilluk kings. Offerings are made at these graves and shrines as part of the religious cult of Nyikang and the royal house, which is the main cult of the Shilluk, though offerings are made to their own ancestors also by the heads of the commoner lineages. Their totemic observances seem to amount to little more than not eating the totemic species, and both totemism and the cult of ancestors of commoner descent groups are said to figure less largely in Shilluk religion than the cult of Nyikang and the kings. Shilluk totemism may in fact be of Dinka origin. Besides the priests of the Nyikang cult, and operating apart from them,

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there are diviners of various sorts, seers and holy men, called *ajuogo*. Such people may also be priests of the Nyikang cult, but in themselves they do not form part of any organized religious system embracing the whole kingdom. There is said to be no cult of the divine being *juok*, who is approached through Nyikang and the Shilluk kings.[1]

Myths of Origin and Traditional History

In considering the Shilluk apprehension of order in their universe, we may first suggest how they classify themselves and other people with whom they have been in contact. The name 'Shilluk,' used by most authorities, seems to be an Arab form of their own name for themselves, *Col* or *Ocolo*, or 'the children of *Col*'. They call their country 'the land of *Col*',[2] but it is also spoken of as 'the land of Nyikang', and they may refer to themselves as Okang, which is possibly derived from the name of their leader. All those who now are Shilluk and live in Shilluk country do not think that they had a common origin. Some of them think that they came originally with Nyikang, and others that they are descended from people who in one way or another Nyikang eventually incorporated into his kingdom. The most detailed and circumstantial of Shilluk myths are about the origin of the present internal organization of the Shilluk kingdom. Less detailed stories, which nevertheless seem, for the Shilluk, to have something of the intrinsic validity which we attach to history, are told in order to assimilate to the Shilluk world their knowledge of other Nilotic peoples. In their accounts of their own history, and of their relationship with other Nilotes, we find an interest in process, which is absent from their accounts of their relations with other peoples outside their system. This in itself might be expected, though it might have been supposed that the long period during which they have been in contact with non-Nilotic peoples would have generated more elaborate aetiological stories to explain the presence and customs of quite foreign human beings. Even within the Nilotic world Shilluk stories of their relationship with the Luo of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, with whom they can have had only the most casual and occasional contact for many years, are a great deal more circumstantial than those of their original relationship with the Dinka, who are among their nearest neighbours. They thus have traditions of relationship which do more than account for their social relations at the present day, and which have not been modified to accord with them. There is some indication that they value the knowledge of historical tradition for its own sake.

Shilluk classification of the peoples with whom they have been in contact, or of whom they know, may briefly be described as follows. Differences of function, status, and origin within the Shilluk kingdom are ultimately attributed to Nyikang, or to one of his successors, the early Shilluk kings.

[1] This very brief survey of those features of Shilluk social organization necessary for an understanding of their cosmology is drawn from many sources, which I have not thought it necessary to cite individually.

[2] Westermann, 1912, *et al.*

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

which largely concern social structure and kinship systems, are to be published later. In this article I have attempted to set down the evidence, often conflicting, concerning the secular and legal functions of the *reth* or king and, since these are relevant, the Shilluk laws of homicide. Professor Evans-Pritchard points out 'if we are to understand the place of the kingship in Shilluk society we must, I think, beware of attempts to define it in terms of judicial and administrative functions and view it rather as a ritual office and in a wider political context'.[1] There are in fact two opposing views. On the one hand are those who consider that the *reth* was the head of a highly-organized administration with a hierarchy of appointed chiefs; that he had absolute powers of adjudication and execution; that he exacted tribute from his people; that he imposed fines upon them for offences against the State. On the other hand are those who hold the opinion that the *reth* had no extensive secular functions of a political or administrative nature, but only a supreme ritual function to perform as the central symbol of the moral and natural order. That the political homogeneity of the Shilluk and the national characteristics of their political structure are maintained by the institution of the *reth* is not to be denied. An analysis of Shilluk political structure, of the segments themselves and of their latent opposition, reveals many forms which closely resemble similar segments in Nuer and Dinka society. The existence of the *reth* gives meaning and co-ordination to the segments of Shilluk society which would otherwise lack political cohesion. But how far are we justified in assuming that the *reth* was an autocratic ruler who intervened in everyday affairs and imposed his authority on his people?

Characteristics of Shilluk Society

The Shilluk are a Nilotic tribe who occupy a narrow strip of country mainly along the west bank of the Nile from Tonga to approximately Lat. 11° N. They are clearly of the same basic stock as the Nuer and Dinka, but have closer affinities with the peoples classified as Shilluk-speaking, i.e. the Anuak, who live along the Baro and Pibor rivers on the frontier of the Sudan and Ethiopia, the Acholi, Lango, Alur, Jopadola, Jaluo,[2] who live as far south as the north-eastern shores of Lake Victoria, and small groups living in the area of the upper waters of the Bahr el Ghazal. Their mythology suggests a common origin and their language is closely allied.

According to tradition the Shilluk migrated from the south through the Bahr el Ghazal into their present country under the leadership of Nyikang, their culture hero and the founder of the present dynasty of Shilluk kings. They conquered and subsequently mixed with the original inhabitants (about whom we know little except that they were probably not a Nilotic people) and extended their territory by raids and infiltration considerably farther north than their present boundaries. Tradition, supported by tribes other than the Shilluk and by Arab tribes living farther north, indicates that Shilluk country once extended as far north as Khartoum.

The Shilluk are now a sedentary people and have nothing approaching the large-scale dry-season migration of the Dinka and Nuer in search of green pasture. Their permanent villages, built on the high ground close to the Nile, are occupied all the

[1] Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] See, for example, Driberg, *The Lango*; Northcote, 'The Nilotic Kavirondo', *J.R.A.I.*, 1907; Evans-Pritchard, 'Luo Tribes and clans', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, no. vii.

year round and only the youths go to the cattle camps in the riverain pastures, which are never more than a few miles from their villages. The Shilluk are not a pastoral people in the sense that the Nuer and Dinka are, and rely to a much greater extent on agricultural products and on fish, for they are skilled and experienced fishermen. Since their migration to their present territory, it is probable that they have never had a very large cattle population, for their riverain pasture is not extensive.[1]

Shilluk clans[2] are not territorial in basis for they are highly segmented and widely distributed throughout the settlements of Shilluk country; as corporate units they have no real significance except at times of national festivals, and then only in the sphere of ritual and ceremony.

The Shilluk are divided into four main classes or groups of clans:

(i) The *kwareth*: the royal house, who trace descent from Nyikang and from whom the *reth* of the Shilluk is chosen.

(ii) The *ororo*: a disinherited branch of the royal house who do not differ from commoners except in the special functions they perform at the installation of the *reth*, during his lifetime, and at his death. They are a distinct exogamous clan, though they may intermarry with the *kwareth* despite common ancestry.

(iii) The *collo*: the name refers collectively to the main body of the Shilluk clans of which a large number trace descent patrilineally from (*a*) the original followers of Nyikang, (*b*) individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards, and (*c*) ancestors who are lost in antiquity, but who may have occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang.

(iv) The *bang reth*: the personal attendants of the *reth*, his wives or wives of past *reths*; the descendants of royal slaves obtained by capture; those who volunteer to serve him by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang,[3] and paupers who volunteer for this form of service in order to exist at all. Finally, there are the alleged descendants of those who were enslaved because their close kinsmen committed homicide, though this statement must be examined more critically later.

There are no real caste distinctions between *kwareth*, *ororo*, *collo*, and *bang reth* and, apart from restrictions on the marriages of daughters of a living or past *reth*, they intermarry freely. The *kwareth*, however, by reason of their connexion with Nyikang and subsequent *reths*, are treated with special respect and this extends to those *bang reth* who have close association with the shrines of Nyikang or of dead kings. The Shilluk basic social structure is very similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka, though there are important differences. The segmentation of the population into territorial units and of the clans into localized lineages has, however, a greater permanency and stability. The distinctive feature of the Shilluk political structure is the existence of an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy and it is in the political sphere

[1] An accurate census taken during the veterinary campaign against trypanosomiasis gives a figure of 85,000. This was after a very severe epidemic in 1946 and it may be assumed that they had lost at least 30 per cent. of their stock. A human census, accurate at any rate within 15 per cent., gives a population figure of 110,000. The ratio of human population to cattle population is therefore between 1:0·5 and 1:0·25. *Cf.* Nuer where highest ratio given is 1:2·5 and the lowest 1:1·2.

[2] *kwa*: Literally 'descendants of', prefixing the name of the clan. '*kwa* Okelo'—the descendants of Okelo—and so on.

[3] Often now attendants at the many shrines of Nyikang.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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they perform in connection with the *reth*. They are a distinct clan 565 614 [644]

(iii) The Colo—the name refers collectively to the main body of Shilluk clans (*kwa*), of which there are a large number — trace descent patrilineally from (a) the original followers of Nyikang, (b) those individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards and (c) those who are lost in antiquity, but who may have been the people who occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang: their traditions certainly confirm this

(iv) The Bang Reth, the personal attendants of the *reth*, his wives or wives of the past *reths*, which are in many case inherited by the successor, and the descendants of the royal slaves obtained by capture from those who volunteer to serve the *reth* by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang, or paupers who volunteer to serve him in order to exist at all, and those persons who were enslaved because their brothers committed homicide 565 567 644

There is no real caste distinction between the Kwareth and Colo. Moreover the Kwareth are themselves a patrilineal clan and therefore exogamous, and there is no mutual ban on marriage between them and the main body of the people, except in the case of the *reth*'s daughters, who are not allowed to marry at all. The Kwareth, however by reason of their connection with Nyikang and previous *reths* are treated with special respect. 565 614 644 [582]

The Shilluk have less cattle than their Nuer and Dinka neighbours and being predominantly sedentary rely more upon agricultural products. Apart from cultivation—almost entirely millet—and the milk and meat from their cattle, the Shilluk supplement their diet with fish and they have the reputation among other tribes of being exceptionally skilled fishermen. Except for the more permanent territorial basis of their settlements, the basic social structure is very 105

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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105 similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka. They have, however, an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy, of which there is no counterpart among their more democratic Nilotic neighbours, and which shows more definite and developed principles than those found in the institution of kings among the Anuak and chiefs among the Acholi. Whether this established and institutionalized monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere or a natural and spontaneous development from the politico-religious functionaries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking peoples is a controversial subject, which we do not propose to discuss here.[4]

Shilluk religion and the tradition of Nyikang.

776 The all-powerful being who exists in the minds of the Shilluk as a remote and amoral diety is called Juok. Juok is the Shilluk conception of God and is present to a greater or lesser degree in all things. Juok is the explanation of the unknown, the reassuring justification of all the supernatural phenomena, good or bad, of which life is made up. The principal medium through whom Juok is approached is Nyikang. The distinction between them is not clear. Nyikang is Juok, but Juok is not Nyikang, for Nyikang is also a mythological figure who takes his place as the hero-leader of Shilluk tradition. He is also the first *reth* of the Shilluk and the founder of the royal 643 house. Further the soul of Nyikang is reincarnate in every Shilluk 776 *reth*, and thus exists both in the past and the present. Nyikang is [775] the *reth*, but the *reth* is not Nyikang. This paradox of the unity yet separation of the three is not easy to define. The Shilluk themselves would find it difficult to explain. Juok, Nyikang, and the *reth* represent the line through whom divinity runs, a conception which may be expressed as an analogy to the ancestor cult, only the cult is symbolic of the tribe as a whole rather than of the Kwareth alone or other individual kinship groups. The *reth* is clearly himself the medium through whom both Nyikang and, more vaguely, Juok are approached, and is the human intercessor of mankind with God. Voluntarily by

4. See C. G. Seligman, *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. (1934), p. 60.

Identification

The Shilluk are a tribe belonging to the Nilotic branch of the Eastern sub-family of the Sudanic linguistic stock. They numbered about 100, 000 in 1932, but Evans-Pritchard (1948) gives their population as 110, 000. From 1820 on, they were subject to intermittent taxation by the Turkish government of Egypt, which finally conquered them in 1867, incorporating them in the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently they came under Mahdist domination, which ended with Kitchener's conquest of the Sudan and the establishment of British rule in 1898.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural and sedentary, with sorghum and pearl millet (Pennisetum spicatum) as the staple crops. Also grown are maize, broom-corn millet (Panicum miliaceum), sesame, cow peas (Vigna sinensis), broad beans (Faba vulgaris), jack beans (Canavalia ensiformis), cucumbers, melons (Cucumis melo), watermelons, pumpkins, and some rice and peanuts.

Zebu cattle, goats, sheep, dogs (for hunting), and chickens are kept, but animal husbandry plays a markedly less prominent role in the economy than among the Nilotic tribes farther south. A 1903 census showed 1. 2 cattle per family and 6. 4 sheep and goats. Cattle are important for prestige, marriage payments, and milk, but they are not bled while alive.

There is a modest amount of gathering of wild roots, seeds, and fruits. Hunting was formerly important; antelope, elephant, and rhinoceros were caught, and the harpooning of hippopotamus was both a major sport and a prime source of meat. Fishing--done with harpoons, spears, and nets--is very important during the rainy season.

Sex Division of Labor

Men hunt. Cattle are tended exclusively by men and boys, and milked by boys. Agricultural work is performed by both sexes--more by the men today, more by the women formerly, when warfare was prevalent.

Property

Movable wealth consists primarily of livestock, secondarily of slaves, iron weapons, dugout canoes, drums, and ivory armbands.

Land, including grazing and fishing rights, is communally owned by the local community, more specifically by the founding or dominant lineage thereof. Individuals acquire usufruct rights, presumably heritable, to plots which they bring under cultivation.

Inheritance is patrilineal--by ElSo, by YoBr in default of sons. The heir is obligated to provide cattle for the marriages of his younger brothers.

Social Stratification

There is a complex structure of social classes. In interclass marriages the children take the status of their father. The distinct classes are as follows:

a. Royalty (nyireth), consisting of the king, his children, and the children of all previous kings. The females are forbidden to marry. The males, all of whom are eligible to succeed to the kingship, are compelled to live away from the capital with their maternal kinsmen.

b. Nobility. This class consists of all the patrilineal descendants of former kings who are not actually the children of a king. They are differentiated from the first class mainly by their ineligibility to succeed to the throne. They are treated with deference but lack authority unless they happen to be heads of communities. They belong to the royal sib, which is the largest in the land (numbering 7 per cent of the total population).

c. Degraded royalty (ororo). This class consists of a single small sib comprising the patrilineal descendants of members of the royal class who were in former times, for various reasons, declared ineligible to succeed to the kingship. Except for certain ritual functions their status differs little from that of the nobility.

d. Commoners (colo). This class is composed of the patrilineal descendants of the Shilluk followers of Nyikang, who traditionally conquered the Shilluk country and founded the state.

e. Retainers (bang reth). This class consists of clients of the king, who are organized into an artificial exogamous sib reported to be even larger than the royal sib. They are composed of the following and their patrilineal descendants: war captives kept by the king as personal servants, convicted murderers and their brothers, and poor commoners and aliens who have attached themselves to the king in return for cattle to marry with. They are ineligible to hold land or to intermarry with the royal class and thus have a status somewhat lower than that of commoners. In addition to those who are personal retainers of the king, they include retainers (and their patrilineal descendants) assigned to tend the burial shrines of deceased kings in their natal communities, along with the elderly widows of the latter, and others assigned as clients to royal princes "planted out" in their maternal communities.

f. Slaves, comprising war captives, slaves purchased from the Arabs, children bought from poor parents during a famine, and their descendants. Hofmayr also mentions debt slaves. The children of slaves are slaves, but there is no prohibition against a slave man marrying a free woman.

Marriage

Marriage involves a substantial bride-price and usually also a certain amount of premarital bride-service. An average bride-price consists of ten cattle, seven sheep or goats, and some spears and other goods. A man usually derives the bulk of his bride-price from that received for his younger sister. It is paid to the head of the bride's homestead, i.e., her Fa, FaBr, or Br, and, in contrast to Dinka and Nuer usage, her MoBr does not receive a share. Payments are normally made in installments over a number of years, at the completion of which the bride leaves her home, commonly with a rite of mock capture.

Polygyny is general (incidence c. 23%), preferential and preferably sororal. Wealthy men also take slave concubines. Each co-wife has

her own hut. Secondary unions, which Westermann suggests are of the "seed-raising" type, are customary with BrWi and FaWi. Howell denies "ghost marriages" of Dinka and Nuer type.

Family

The normal residential unit is an independent polygynous family occupying an individual homestead, typically two huts encircled by a fence. The hamlet is a large extended family or patri-clan.

Residence

Children live in the homestead of their father (ElBr if Fa is dead) until puberty, when girls move to a separate hut and boys go to live in a special hut in the hamlet's cattle corral which serves them as a bachelors' dormitory. Patrilocal residence is the norm, though it may be preceded by a period of from a few days to a year during which the bride continues to live in her paternal homestead. Individual cases of matrilocal residence occur, this being the principal way in which a new lineage becomes established in a community. There are also individual cases of neolocal residence, especially when royal retainers are removed from their special hamlet near the capital and attached to princes or royal shrines. Avunculocal residence from birth is the rule for royal princes. They are forbidden to live in the capital, and a wife of the king always leaves the capital to bear her children, who are brought up by their maternal relatives, usually a MoBr. This is the way in which royal lineages become established in a large number of communities.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Strict exogamy prevails with respect to the hamlet, but there is a tendency (by no means absolute) toward local endogamy within the community as a whole.

Marriage is forbidden with any first cousin, indeed with any known consanguineal relative. There are no bilateral kindreds.

Kin groups are of the segmentary patrilineal lineage type. There are about 100 exogamous patri-sibs with totemic traces and bearing the names of their traditional common ancestors. They are not corporate units and are scattered over the country, but they are divided into corporate major and minor patri-lineages. A major lineage comprises the members of a sib living in one community; a minor

lineage, those living in one hamlet. A man tends to identify himself with his major lineage rather than his sib, and sib exogamy is occasionally violated for very distant sibmates.

There are a number of suggestive intimations of possible former matrilineal descent. One is the avunculocal rule of residence for royal princes. A second is the prohibition of marriage for royal princesses, which eliminates the possibility of any matrilineal claimant for the throne. A third is the fact that all lineages in a community except the dominant one are considered to be attached to the latter as "sisters' sons"; they are, of course, usually established by the matrilocal or avunculocal residence of their founder. In addition, the avunculate is strong.

Kinship Terminology

Fa--wa, wia. Mo--maia. Ch--nyara. So--wat, wada. Sibling terms are descriptive, meaning FaCh, MoCh, FaSo, MoSo.

FaBr called "father." MoBr--na. MoSi--ma. FaSi--waja. BrSo--umade. SiSo--oka. SiDa--nyaka. GrFa--kwa, kwaia. GrMo--wanga. GrCh--kware.

Cousin terms are descriptive and thus of Sudanese type.

Settlement Pattern

The Shilluk country is divided into about 100 settlements or communities, each consisting of a cluster of hamlets united for defense and age-grade rituals. Hamlets are strung along the banks of the Nile, about 100 yards apart. They consist of from one to fifty homesteads each, the homesteads being commonly arranged in a horseshoe around a central cattle corral. Dwellings are round with cylindrical mud walls and conical roofs of poles and grass thatch.

Community Organization

Each hamlet consists of a localized minor patri-lineage, and is thus a patrilocal clan-barrio. One lineage in each community is the dominant lineage (dyil), usually consisting of the patrilineal descendants of the founding lineage but sometimes of a stronger lineage, occasionally of the royal sib, which has supplanted it. The other lineages, called wedh, which often belong to other sibs, are bound to the dominant lineage as its "sisters' sons," and were usually originally established by a matrilocal or avunculocal marriage.

Each community has an age-grade organization, which formerly functioned in war but today only regulates etiquette at feasts. The grades are three in number (young men, warriors, and elders), and each is commonly divided into three subdivisions. As boys reach puberty they are initiated into the lowest age-grade and into succes - sive divisions thereof. As these grow unwieldy, but not at set intervals, a community "cutting ceremony" is held, at which the surviving men of the oldest grade pass into retirement, the older subdivisions of the intermediate grade pass into the oldest grade, and the most recent subdivisions of the young men pass into the intermediate grade. The movement is sometimes by one but usually by two age-sets or sub-grades at a time, rather than by an entire grade.

Local Government

Each hamlet has a headman, who represents it on the council of the community and receives a robe of office from the chief of the community or from the king. The headman is the head of the minor lineage localized in the hamlet. The community or settlement has a chief (jago), who is normally the head of the dominant lineage. He has ritual connections with the soil, and maintains the local shrine of Nyimang, the royal ancestral spirit. He is elected by the council of lineage heads from among the men of the senior minor lineage of the dyil lineage. He is directly responsible to the king, who confirms him in office but does not appoint him.

State

The Shilluk are organized into a single tribal state under a divine king (reth), who resides in the capital town of Fashoda where he is served by a large body of retainers. He is the direct patrilineal descendant of Nyikang, the culture hero and traditional founder of the kingdom through conquest, and his authority is based on the be - lief that the spirit of Nyikang dwells within him and rules through him. A royal stool is a symbol of his office, and it is his duty to maintain and replenish the sacred cattle herds of Nyikang. He is the high priest of the country, making sacrifices for rain and for victory in war. The entire welfare of the country is believed to rest upon him (or rather upon the indwelling spirit of Nyikang). He must therefore maintain himself in a state of ritual purity and perfect

health, for if he weakens or suffers misfortune this may indicate the loss of his divinity and the possibility that the spirit of Nyikang may desert his people. This can be prevented only by regicide (see be - low). The king maintains a court and a harem of wives. When he dies, his elderly widows tend his tomb; younger ones are inherited by his successor. Hofmayr states that his principal wife can serve as his representative in criminal tribunals in his absence. Several sources report that kings often married their sisters or half-sisters, but in general all royal princesses were forbidden to marry or bear children. The death of a king is followed by an anarchic interregnum while his successor is being selected from among the men of the royal class by a body which may be called an electoral college. The principal persons in this body were the chiefs of the two provinces, a northern and a southern one, into which the kingdom was divided, but it also included the chiefs of the northern and southern marches or border communities, the chiefs of the nine communities descended from those among whom Nyikang traditionally divided his conquered territory, and the chiefs of three prominent noble lineages. The electors must come to a decision, else the state will cease to exist and its divine support be lost. Naturally, however, they tend to support different candidates, the chiefs of the two provinces being particularly rivalrous. Compromises are therefore inevitable. A particularly common compromise is for the supporters of one strong candidate to accept another on the understanding that their own candidate will be groomed by the winner to succeed him. The king-elect will then do this; if when he dies the scion of the other line is elected, the latter is likely to groom the son of his predecessor. Thus, the succession, though patrilineal, shifts from one branch to another of the royal lineage. Once the electoral college has agreed on the king-elect, the effigy of Nyikang is brought from his shrine in the north by his priests and paraded through the northern province, collecting an army which meets in mock combat a similar army raised in the southern province and headed by the king-elect. The latter is defeated and taken to the capital. Here the effigy of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then removed, and the king-elect seated upon it, trembling as the spirit of Nyikang enters into him. A second mock battle then occurs, in which the king's army wins, symbolizing the fact that the spirit of Nyikang has now departed from his effigy and taken up his abode in the body of the

king. Evans-Pritchard denies that the Shilluk king possessed any administrative authority or judicial power, alleging that he served only as a mediator in disputes and that his influence rested solely on his personal prestige, divinity, and ritual functions. He states quite correctly that the two provincial chiefs and the other electors had no administrative functions, the community chiefs being responsible directly to the king, but otherwise his denial of an authoritarian state among the Shilluk appears dubious. Among earlier writers, both Hofmayr and Westermann speak of the king's power as absolute, and both Howell and Thomson dwell upon the "theoretical omnipotence" of his office. The long period of Turkish Egyptian, Mahdist, and British domination may well have obscured the original power of the Shilluk ruler. It is obvious that in his large body of retainers the king had at his command a major instrument of force, and even Evans-Pritchard admits that he intervened in local disputes, using his retainers and troops levied from other communities to attack a recalcitrant local chief, burning his homestead and expropriating his cattle, part of which were kept and part distributed among the cooperating chiefs. Evans-Pritchard also admits that such a show of force, or its possibility, was usually enough to abate or discourage resistance. Moreover, a king who could not command such punitive force thereby gave evidence of weakness and was likely to be overthrown. This raises a second moot point--that of regicide. All the earlier sources state that if a king became ill or senile, or unable to satisfy his wives sexually, or if the state underwent some major misfortune such as a famine, an epidemic, or a disastrous war, this gave evidence of his loss of divine power and made it necessary to kill him to preserve the society. Moreover, the Shilluk themselves say, and unquestionably believe, that under such circumstances the king may be strangled or walled up in a house and left to die. The Seligmans specifically state that "there is not the least doubt that kings of the Shilluk were killed with due ceremony when they began to show signs of old age or ill health." It is also clear that the kings themselves stood in great fear of assassination and took extraordinary precautions to forestall it, e.g., expelling all royal princes, in other words all possible candidates for his office, from the capital to the communities of their maternal kinsmen. They also sleep only in the daytime and remain awake at night. Nevertheless, Evans-Pritchard regards it as improbable that regicide of this type ever took place.

He admits that "Shilluk kings generally met a violent death" but believes that this did not occur by private assassination but by a prince and his supporters taking advantage of discontent to lead an armed rebellion which, if successful, led to the slaying of the king. Perhaps this issue is purely verbal. There is no inherent reason why an ambitious prince and his supporters should not seek to gain their ends by secret conspiracy and assassination rather than by an open military attack. Indeed, the number and potential military power of the king's retainers would seem to suggest the greater likelihood of success of the former. Moreover, Evans-Pritchard ignores the distributional evidence of regicide through conspiracy in the Fung states to the east, whose inhabitants belong to the same general culture area as the Shilluk. However it was accomplished, there can be no doubt of the fact and frequency of regicide in the Shilluk state.

Warfare

Intertribal warfare was formerly prevalent, being waged for women, slaves, cattle, and other booty, especially against the Dinka and Nuer. The king might either keep the booty for himself or distribute it. There were also civil wars over the succession, and cattle raiding between communities. If a community carried the latter too far, however, the king was likely to wage a punitive war against it with the help of its injured neighbors.

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